

A
SHORT COMMENT
ON
St. P A U L ' S
BEAUTIFUL DESCRIPTION
OF
C H A R I T Y.

By W. WALKER, M. A.

CHICHESTER:

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SHORT COMMENT

BY J. P. U. S.

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BY W. W. M. A.

CHRONOLOGICAL

TABLE OF THE
HISTORY OF THE
MUSEUM

TO THE
WORTHY INHABITANTS
OF THE
CITY OF CHICHESTER,
AS A PUBLIC TESTIMONY
OF GRATITUDE AND RESPECT
FOR THEIR MANY LIBERAL CONTRIBUTIONS
TO INSTRUCT THE IGNORANT,
AND RELIEVE THE AFFLICTED,
THE FOLLOWING COMMENT IS INSCRIBED
BY THEIR DEVOTED SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.

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THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

IN TWO VOLUMES

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THE SECOND EDITION

A

COMMENT, &c.*

THE great Apostle of the Gentiles, had, in the Chapter preceding this description of charity, pointed out to his Corinthian converts the necessity and the use of those various endowments which had been granted to

* See 13th Chapt. of 1st Epist. to the
Corinth.

A

some

Some among them for the benefit and edification of all. But as they seemed to contend for the superiority in the several powers with which they had been endowed, and affected to treat their humbler brethren with unchristian contempt, he informs them, that those of the meanest abilities in the church, were alike necessary in the respective offices they filled; and that there could be no just ground for glorying on account of any extraordinary attainments, since notwithstanding this *diversity of gifts*, it is the same gracious *Spirit who divideth to every man severally*

severally as he will. And after all, whatever might be their endowments, and how great soever their proficiency under them, yet as all these were transitory in their nature, and endured but for a time, he would wish to direct their attention to something that might survive this imperfect state of being, and accompany them into the regions of eternity. I will *shew unto you*, (says he) *a more excellent way.* I will unfold the several properties of a christian virtue, which shall outlive all those accomplishments for which you are now contending, and flourish in.

the eternal world when prophecy shall be no longer necessary, and faith itself shall be succeeded by vision. *Here* your ambition may exert itself without the possibility of censure: for the more you endeavour to excel, the more humble you will become, and the more diffident of yourselves even under the highest improvements. He then goes on to describe, in a language peculiar to himself, and with all that energy for which he was so remarkable, the excellency, and the eternal duration of *Charity*. We will therefore attempt to follow him through all the beautiful

Beautiful gradations of this masterly description, that by seeing and admiring the salutary effects of this divine virtue in all its different branches, we may transcribe it into our practice here, and enjoy the inestimable rewards of it hereafter.

Though I speak (says this inspired orator) with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

Though I am ever so much admired for my knowledge of languages,

guages, and though I could pronounce them with an eloquence irresistible, yet if I make not such a gift subservient to the great ends for which it was bestowed, without any affectation of worldly applause; if, in short, I use it not with a disinterested view to promote the glory of God, and the happiness of man, however I may attract the notice of beings weak and frail as myself, I am no more than an empty sound in the sight of Heaven.

And

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

Though I have abilities to expound the scriptures, and enforce the holy doctrines they contain; though I could unfold the sublimest mystery, and bring it on a level with the meanest understanding; though I could work the most stupendous miracle, and invert the order of nature itself, yet if I have not charity, if the love of God and
man,

man, be not the motive of my actions, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor; and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

Though I part with every thing for the relief of others, and though I lay down my life under the semblance of martyrdom, yet neither my liberality in the one case, nor my zeal in the other, can avail me, while the sacred principle of love to man for God's sake is wanting.

They

They must, under such circumstances, be the effect of vanity and ostentation; they must arise from a desire of seeking honor from men; and indeed they may procure me the applauses of a superficial world, and perhaps immortalize me in the annals of fame; but in the sight of *him* who knows the very springs of action, and to whom all hearts are open, I shall *be no more than a vapour that appeareth but a little time, and then vanisheth away.*

The Apostle having thus informed his converts, that it is the

B

principle

principle or *design* with which we act, that constitutes our worth or our demerit in the sight of God, and that all our boasted attainments will profit us nothing unless sanctified by *charity*, proceeds to define this heavenly virtue, and to unfold, in the most persuasive and inviting manner, its different properties.

Charity suffereth long, and is kind.

It is the leading characteristic of charity, that notwithstanding the provocations of malice, or the bitterness of unjust reproach, she is
unshaken

unshaken in her principles, and, for the most part, unruffled in her temper. She resists every temptation to revenge; and smiles at every attempt to deprive her of her peace and serenity. So far from indulging a morose and sul-
len spirit, she is courteous and amiable in her conduct, compassionate and gentle to all.

Charity envieth not.

Charity is not cast down at the prosperity of others; she does not envy a rising reputation, or an increasing fortune, but wisely con-

B 2 sidering

sidering that every real blessing which her neighbour enjoys is the original gift of Providence, she *rejoices with them that do rejoice*, and partakes with them in all their happiness.

Charity vaunteth not itself.

She does not boast herself in the multitude of her riches, or in any other perishable enjoyment, she knows that even her powers of understanding were only lent her for the good of others; and therefore instead of glorying in any acquisition here below, she attributes

butes whatever she possesses to the fountain of all goodness, under a constant and humble conviction, that the hand that bestows blessings, can as easily take them away.

Charity is not puffed up.

There is no haughtiness in her demeanor, no vain affectation of superiority in her treatment of others. She condescends to the prejudices of the weak, and to the mistakes of the ignorant. High birth, an exalted fortune, or rare abilities, if such should be her portion,

tion, will only afford her more happy opportunities of shewing her own humility, and of manifesting to the world that she sets no value on such distinctions, but looks down with pity and holy indignation on the boasted but false claims of pride.

Charity doth not behave itself unseemly.

There is nothing insolent, or even irregular, in her behaviour to others. She is kind even in reproof, and treats all her fellow creatures with a decent respect, and a becoming modesty.

Charity

Charity seeketh not her own.

She is not unreasonable in her claims, much less oppressive in her demands upon other men. She is more disposed to suffer herself, than that others should suffer through her means. And, with a kind attention to the circumstances of her neighbour, she will be ready to relinquish her own just rights, rather than exact them with unrelenting rigor. Is the industrious mechanic, or the indigent labourer fearful of impending ruin? And is mercy implored in the
 pathetic

pathetic language of holy writ, *have patience with me, and I will pay thee all?* Charity, in such a case, *seeketh not her own*: She will be content with a moderate share of the good things of the world, rather than purchase luxuries by adding to the calamities of the wretched. And in all her transactions, charity is benevolent, kind, and tender-hearted; not studious only of her own welfare, but careful also to promote the good of others, and diffusing happiness and joy wherever she appears.

Charity

Charity is not easily provoked, or exasperated.

She is always on her guard against the sudden impulse of an angry spirit, or the dictates of intemperate zeal. She is therefore not so tenacious of her own judgment, as to admit no opposition to it; *but always esteeming others better than herself*, she is modest in maintaining her own opinions, and respectfully attentive to those who wish honestly to correct them.

Charity thinketh no evil.

She will make every candid allowance for the miscarriages of others, and put the best construction upon every thing they do. So far from wantonly imputing evil, she will not harbour even a thought of it; but sadly conscious of the frailties she feels within her own breast, she is better disposed, and better qualified to allow for the faults of others. If some are *indeed* guilty, and are become the just objects of public animadversion, or public punishment,

ment, charity will drop a tear over their failings, and wish devoutly for their amendment in this life, and their final happiness in that which is to come.

She therefore rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth.

She has no unnatural pleasure in the fall of her neighbour, but is concerned for that depravity of nature, of which we are all but too sensible, and to the effects of which we are all exposed. *She rejoiceth in the truth.* Her happiness is derived from the virtue of

others; and the more good she
sees in the world, the more exalted
is her satisfaction.

*Charity beareth or covereth all
things.*

Charity does not delight in pro-
claiming the injuries she has at
any time received, but is patient
and silent under them. Her
mouth is not open in slanderous
attacks on the reputation of her
neighbour; she is always more
ready to suppress, than to propa-
gate a malicious story, or an idle
tale. And therefore it is that *she*
believeth

believeth all things; that is, all things favourable to the character of others. Is there but too much reason to suspect another of a crime? Charity will still *believe* that it may be otherwise. Is the person thus suspected at length publicly accused, and as publicly found guilty? Charity will *believe* that constitutional infirmity, or some other strong temptation may have hurried him away; and is unwilling to suppose that his principles are vicious, or his heart corrupt. She therefore *hopeth all things*. She hopeth that as passion may have led him into sin, reason
and

and grace may recover him out of it.

Charity endureth all things.

She beareth all the evils or miseries of life with a becoming fortitude, and even with a cheerful resignation. She esteems no trouble too great, no labour too painful, if she can thereby do good to others. Neither insolence, nor persecution, nor death, can deter her from her duty. How often do we see her with the * Gospel in
her

* See Bishop HURD's most elegant compliment to the character of a Christian missionary,

her hand, and “ her Saviour in her
 “ heart, make her way through
 “ burning deserts, and the howl-
 “ ing wilderness, braving the rage
 “ of climates, and the inconve-
 “ niences of perilous voyages,” in
 order to preach the glad tidings of
 salvation to the poor unenlight-
 ened savage, and turn him from
 the power of Satan, unto God.

Thus have I endeavoured to
 display the beauties of this divine
 virtue. A virtue, without the
 practice of which, all other attain-
 ments

sionary, in a sermon preached by his Lord-
 ship before the Society for the propagation
 of the Gospel.

ments are unprofitable and vain. A virtue, which shall last through the endless ages of eternity; for *charity never faileth*; but *whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away*. Charity shall survive every accomplishment that can adorn the human mind, and flourish when all the parade of unsanctified learning, and *philosophy, falsely so called*, shall cease and be no more. Such pompous attainments we every day see abused to the worst of purposes. We see men of the most distinguished ingenuity,

genuity, and the most brilliant parts, debasing the talents which God has given them, by impairing the functions of virtue, and softening the deformity of vice. We see others daily constructing systems from which no general benefit can be derived, and almost proving the futility of literary acquisitions, by their own absurd manner of using them. But charity is ever consistent and the same: More attentive to the common good, than vainly anxious to raise her own reputation, she pursues, with a steady magnanimity, the great ends of her exist-

D

ence,

ence, unaffected by the applauses of the world, and unintimidated by its censures. Her happiness is not founded on so feeble a basis as that of popular opinion. A mind conscious of its own rectitude, is to her the best recompence, the surest and the most desirable reward.

Seeing then that all things shall one day be dissolved ; that every effort of genius, and every monument of art, shall cease and be no more ; let us pursue what can never fail us, and lay up a treasure which no moth can corrupt, or thief approach. The pleasures which charity shall

one

one day bestow, are too refined for description: The tongue cannot tell, nor can the heart conceive them. Even *here*, her ways are *ways of pleasantness*, and *all her paths are peace*. And *when the heavens shall pass away, and the earth be moved out of its place*, charity shall reign for evermore: Reign in those peaceful regions, where, escaped from the storms and tempests of her mortal state, she shall delight to contemplate the adorable perfections of that great and good Being, who is the fountain from which she originally flowed, the eternal source of *all love*.

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